



JAG

Joint Action Group for
Environmental Clean-Up of the
Muggah Creek Watershed

HSWG: Health Studies Working Group

*Working with you to achieve a healthier
community.*

Our mission:

To study the impact of
the Muggah Creek
Watershed on the
human health of the
community and to
enhance it's health by
involving, educating,
and empowering the
community through
partnerships.

Vision Statement:

In the year 2009, the Public Health Assessment has been completed using the ATSDR model as a guide.

- In conforming to JAG's philosophical commitment to an open, transparent, representative, and inclusive approach, the HSWG has consulted with relevant scientific experts, has achieved broad-based participation in the public health assessment process, has maintained open communication with the community and other partners, has solicited and responded to community comments on the public health assessment, and has broad-based community participation in identifying and acting on recommendations.
- The HSWG's public health assessment risk assessor has been instrumental in providing expert information used to protect health during the clean-up and remediation process.
- A baseline regarding health status has been established. A system for ongoing monitoring of human health and health outcomes is in operation. HSWG has worked with community partners to generate an annual report card on the health of Sydney which shows health improving at a rate faster than that of the province as a whole.
- There is evidence of new community pride as a broad-based multi-sectoral partnership works toward a healthy community.
- Goals defined to fulfill mission and to achieve vision:
 1. Complete public health assessment using the ATSDR model as a guide.
 2. Achieve broad-based participation in the public health assessment process and in identifying and acting on recommendations.
 3. Provide expert risk information related to the clean-up and remediation.
 4. Consult with relevant worldwide scientific experts as required.
 5. Establish a system for ongoing monitoring of human health and health outcomes in Cape Breton County.
 6. Participate in multi-sectoral partnerships working towards the creation of a healthy community.

Since the initial pamphlet, numerous health studies have been completed and important new projects are underway.

Completed:

Mortality Analysis – 1951-1994

- in Sydney there is an excess death rate of 16% from numerous causes indicating that a mixture of environmental, behavioral, socio-economic, and other factors are involved
- specific follow-up studies are necessary to determine causes – an investigation of lung, colon, and breast cancer has already started

Reproductive Outcomes Project – 1988-1997

- residents of Sydney had higher rates of congenital abnormalities compared to residents of the rest of Cape Breton County and compared to the rest of Nova Scotia, however 96.6% of infants born in Sydney are born with no abnormalities
- the prevalence of risk factors was slightly higher among residents of Sydney, emphasizing areas where preventive strategies might improve reproductive outcomes

Cancer Incidence Project – 1980-1998

- the purpose of this project was to compare cancer incidence rates (new cases of cancer) in Sydney with cancer incidence rates in Nova Scotia from 1980-1998
- there was an increase in colon cancer in men and increases in breast, cervical, and oral cancers in women from Sydney when compared to those from Cape Breton County

HSWG Opinion Poll – 1999

- the majority of individuals contacted were aware of a JAG working group concerned with health studies
- those contacted suggested that future studies should address cancer, the effect of pollution on health, and other prevalent diseases
- this survey led to the creation of the Community Consultation / Animation Project

Present and Future Projects

Geographical Support for the Population

Health Survey in Cape Breton County

- this is a combined effort of many working groups and several government departments

- health data from the mortality study, the cancer incidence study, and other health projects will be entered into this system
- the completed project will be a visual display tool to look for relationships between health data, environmental data, and other pertinent factors

Investigation of Lung, Breast and Colon Cancers

- based on results from the Mortality Analysis, a case-control study is underway to examine the possibility of an environmental association with these three cancers
- colon cancer and lung cancer are frequently observed in coke-ovens workers and the objective of this project is to determine if environmental factors in Sydney contribute to the incidence of these specific tumor sites

Community Consultation / Animation Project

- the aim of this project is to engage the community in the public health risk assessment process
- this project will also provide education about the site, the contaminants, and the JAG process
- community members will have an opportunity to identify and evaluate ways they wish to be involved in the public health assessment process

Current Site Health Risk Assessment

- in the near future, knowledge of the current site will be used to assess the potential effects the site is having on the health of the community
- as more data is gathered over the next one to two years, this assessment will be updated periodically
- if results indicate the current site is creating negative health implications, measures will have to be implemented

Strategic Action Plan Development

- this is near completion and will help to map the future plans of the HSWG
- our action plan will strive to address the needs of the community, fulfill our mission statement, and complement the efforts of other working groups

What is JAG?

Created in the fall of 1996, the Joint Action Group (JAG) is an innovative community-driven process: a group of individuals working together with the goal of remediating the Muggah Creek Watershed, one of Canada's most toxic sites. Beyond the original perceived need to find a solution to the Sydney Tar Ponds, JAG's mandate is much broader. It also includes the former Coke Ovens sites and the impacts of the MAID - all part of the Muggah Creek Watershed area.

JAG is comprised of local residents, business people and representatives of the three levels of government, First Nation's representatives, and youth. JAG's infrastructure is made up of several working groups 'and' standing subcommittees: Health Studies, Site Security, Public Education and Participation (PEP), Environmental Data Gathering and Research (EDGAR), Remedial Options, Governance, and, the Ethics, Planning, Financial and Human Resources subcommittees. JAG is supported by a Secretariat, managed by a Steering Committee and reports overall to a Roundtable, which is made up of some 50 members representing the community.

JAG strives to work together as one community, one "voice", merging the individual interests of all those involved for the greater good of the community.

For more information on the JAG or the Muggah Creek Watershed Clean-Up:

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